Attitudes Regarding the Assignment Process Among the Navy Medical Corps

# Abstract

Introduction: The Navy assignments process involves one officer (detailer) who writes orders directing personnel to locations worldwide. This is done with variable input from the service member and community leader. This process does not adhere to known best practices as determined by economists who specialize in designing markets. The National Residency Match Program (NRMP) is an example of an ideal marketplace where assignments are optimized.

Methods: A pilot project was planned to incorporate these marketplace principles. As part of the pilot project, a survey was performed to assess the perceptions of Navy physicians regarding the assignment process.

Results: The overall response rate was 33%; the OB-GYN community response rate was 40%. Only 41% of medical officers (MOs) thought the process was transparent with favoritism being most oft reported concern but 45% reported satisfaction with the current process. MOs ranked desirability of different geographic regions; Southern California ranked highest with 22% ranking it first choice. When ranking desired career paths, clinical medicine was most desired at 18% followed by academic medicine at 10%. The majority of respondents believe members coming from less desirable jobs should get preference for future assignments. When offered the opportunity to participate in an assignment process incorporating principles used in the NRMP, only 24% voiced interest.

Conclusions: Our survey establishes baseline perceptions of the Navy Medical Corps assignment process. MOs have diverse preferences. Currently, only a minority of respondents in our survey indicated an interest in changing the billet assignment process to one that incorporates marketplace principles.

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